Expat Brothers and Sisters in Christ? English women religious, the exile male colleges and national identities in Counter-Reformation Europe

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In 1598, the first English convent was established in Brussels and was to be followed by a further twenty-one establishments across Flanders and France with around four thousand women entering them over the following two hundred years. Most were enclosed convents, in theory cut off from the outside world. However, in practice the nuns were not isolated and their contacts and networks spread widely. These contacts included other Catholic exile institutions. In some instances, there were English colleges located nearby, such as in Paris, where three communities of English women religious shared the city with a college for secular clergy. This chapter will explore how much these male and female English institutions mixed. Were they concentrated only on their own survival or were male and female expressions of the Counter-Reformation bound by national interest? In a city like Lisbon – where the Bridgettine community and the College of Ss Peter and Paul were geographically separated from the majority of their fellow countrymen and women in exile – was the need for collaboration and shared networks a vital means of survival? The final part of this chapter will examine whether Catholic identity overrode national interests. It will ask whether archipelagic Catholic identities were formed in the Catholic diaspora through the relationship of the English convents with the continental Irish and Scottish colleges: was there a British Catholic identity? By answering such questions, this chapter will investigate whether gender and national boundaries were overridden for the sake of Catholic survival.

I

In 1568, William Allen capitalized on the sizeable English Catholic diaspora following the Elizabethan ‘purges’ at Oxbridge to found Douai College. Whilst gaining a reputation as the first Tridentine seminary, it was more pointedly the first institutional outlet for English Catholic religious life following Elizabeth I’s accession and the return of the state to a position of official Protestantism. Douai was to be followed by numerous other male colleges that spread throughout France, the Low Countries and Spain, not to mention the reimagining of the English Hospice in Rome as a seminary. Institutional expressions on the other side of the gender divide arrived a little later. By 1598, English women had finally found a nationally

specific outlet for their religious life having previously entered local 'foreign' convents, such as the Flemish Augustinian convent of St Ursula's in Louvain. Over the following two hundred years, until the French Revolution forced many of these exile houses to disperse or flee to England, a map of English male and female institutions developed yet little consideration has been paid to the interaction between the sexes.

On one level, there were obvious connections. Drawing from the same pool of Catholic families in England, members of the convents inevitably had relatives in the colleges. For example, Isabella Corby and her husband lived in exile but decided to separate and pursue religious vocations, he becoming a Jesuit laybrother and she professing as a lay sister at the Ghent Benedictines in 1633. Four of the couple's sons were educated at the English Jesuit college of St Omers, three subsequently entering the Society. Two of their daughters became lay sisters at the Brussels Benedictines.[1] At the Louvain Augustinian house, it was recorded with evident pride of Anne Worthington, who professed in 1615, that her father was 'nephew to Doctor Worthington of happie memorie that was many years President of the Colledge at Doway'.[2] A similar hint of pride can be found at the Paris Augustinians in 1697, when they recorded the arrival of Elizabeth, Mary and Dorothy Witham at the convent school, brought by 'Mr Robt Witham their Unkle Master of Divinity at Douay, who went from thence to meet them at Brudges accompanied & brought them to the Monastery'.[3] Social grandstanding could work both ways: the keeper of the college diary at Douai recorded the arrival of Marmaduke Langdale as a student in 1735, remarking that he was a relation of the abbess at the Dunkirk Poor Clares.[4]

An equally expected relationship, but on a more institutional level, was the provision of confessors. A gendered reading of the relationship between confessors and women religious has frequently commented on the high level of control involved, the word 'control' being

My thanks to Caroline Bowden and Gabriel Glickman for their very helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.

[1] Lady Abbess and Community, 'Obituary notices of the nuns of the English Benedictine Abbey of Ghent in Flanders 1627–1811', *Miscellanea XI*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 19 (London: 1917), pp. 54–5. 'Who Were the Nuns?' website: GB052, BB047, BB048.

[2] Douai Abbey, Archives of St Monica's, Louvain and St Augustine's, Newton Abbot, C2, pp. 151–2.

[3] Westminster Diocesan Archives, Paris Diurnal, 9 August 1697.

[4] Edwin H. Burton and Edmond Nolan (eds), *The Douay College Diaries: The Seventh Diary, 1715–1778, Preceded by a Summary of Events, 1691–1715*, CRS, vol. 28 (London: 1928), p. 201. This was Elizabeth Langdale: WWTN, DP081.

particularly loaded.[5] This does recognize, albeit backhandedly, the vital role of confessors; steeped in the ethos of the institution of their training, they represented a direct influence from college to convent. Though this position could be a source of conflict when the holder did not work in harmony with his penitents, it can instead be argued that it is wrong to think of the relationship always in terms of potential gender conflict.[6] It was not necessarily a case of nuns meekly accepting what was placed before them: like lay women in the Counter-Reformation more generally, they knew what was expected of a confessor and it is more accurate to see the relationship in terms of negotiated spiritual authority with their male counterparts.[7] In short, it was in many cases a mutually beneficial relationship and one where some nuns were not afraid of speaking truth to power.[8] As Evangelisti comments, 'Priests served as confessors and spiritual advisors of pious and penitent women, both lay and religious, who laid bare their interior lives, mystic experiences, and visions, but also gave counsel in return, establishing with their confessors relationships of mutual spiritual exchange.'[9]

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[5] For example, see Silvia Evangelisti, *Nuns: A History of Convent Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 74. For such skewed gendered readings, see Darcy Donohue, 'Writing lives: nuns and confessors as auto/biographers in early modern Spain', *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 13 (1989), 230–9; Ottavia Niccoli, 'The end of prophecy', *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (1989), 667–82.

[6] For instance, nun authors sometimes worked with male collaborators: Jaime Goodrich, 'Translating Lady Mary Percy: authorship and authority among the Brussels Benedictines', in Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly (eds), *The English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800: Communities, Culture and Identity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 109–22. For examples of the disputes surrounding the behaviour of confessors at the Grevelines Poor Clares and the Paris Conceptionists, see James E. Kelly (ed.), 'Convent management', *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden, vol. 5 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), pp. 409–39.

[7] For example, see Patricia Ranft, 'A key to counter-reformation women's activism: the confessor-spiritual director', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 10.2 (1994), 7–26; Jenna Lay, 'An English nun's authority: early modern spiritual controversy and the manuscripts of Barbara Constable', in Laurence Lux-Sterritt and Carmen Mangion (eds), *Gender, Catholicism and Spirituality: Women and the Roman Catholic Church in Britain and Europe, 1200–1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 109–11.

[8] See, for example, Jodi Bilinkoff, 'Confessors, penitents, and the construction of identities in early modern Avila', in Barbara B. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (eds), *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 83–100; Colleen M. Seguin, 'Ambiguous liaisons: Catholic women's relationships with their confessors in early modern England', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 95 (2004), 156–85.

[9] Evangelisti, *Nuns*, p. 219.

This is borne out in the convents' relationships with the English colleges, the latter regularly recommending to the nuns suitable candidates for the important job of spiritual direction. For example, the former prefect general of Douai College, Charles Corne, was recommended by the college president to the Paris Conceptionists as a confessor in 1761 and was highly valued by the sisters.[10] Moreover, it was not just any old priest who would be foisted upon the convents, the colleges sending former officials, such as professors of syntax, college procurators and even college superiors.[11] Indeed, two serving rectors of the English Jesuit college at Liège seem to have acted as confessors or spiritual directors at the English Sepulchrine house in the same city in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[12] Not that college presidents were averse to seeing the convents as a useful means to be rid of troublesome members of their own communities. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, prefect general Joseph Digby had been involved in rebellions against reforms of the hierarchy at Douai College. A couple of years later, in 1693, he was sent to be confessor at the Dunkirk Poor Clares, thus negating any influence he may have had over quarrelsome students.[13] Nevertheless, these men frequently maintained contact with their *alma maters*, acting as a link between their former and current institutions, writing letters or visiting.[14] In the eyes of the nuns, the confessors' successes were reflections on the glories of the training received at their colleges. For example, in January 1687, the Louvain Augustinians recorded the death of their confessor, Richard White, noting his piety, wisdom and prudence, declaring him, 'A man extremely proper to direct religious women and all that could be desired in one of his calling'. The canoness chronicler added approvingly, 'Douai College breeding; for he had no other'.[15] Similarly, in 1742, the Rouen Poor Clare chronicler recorded the death of their

[10] He showed himself to the community 'a true Father, helping us in our necessities, spiritual and temporal, and edifying us by the example of his virtues, especially meekness and patience': J. Gillow and R. Trappes-Lomax (eds), *The Diary of the 'Blue Nuns'*, CRS, vol. 8 (London: 1910), p. 341 and CRS, 63, p. 222.

[11] Philip R. Harris (ed.), *Douai College documents, 1639–1794*, CRS, vol. 63 (London: 1972), p. 320; CRS, 8, p. 389; CRS, 28, pp. 23, 154, 230, 243–4, 253.

[12] Richard Trappes-Lomax (ed.), 'Records of the English Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre of Liège, now at New Hall, 1652–1793', in *Miscellanea X*, CRS, vol. 17 (1915), pp. 87, 92, 99. They were John Holme, alias Howard, SJ and Charles Rousse, alias Roels, SJ.

[13] CRS, 28, pp. 7, 12.

[14] CRS, 28, pp. 49, 59, 246, 283, 288, 292. Thomas Winkley, confessor at the Dunkirk Poor Clares, returned to Douai for about a month to recover his health in 1737: CRS, 28, pp. 212–13.

[15] Douai Abbey, C2, p. 623.

confessor, Roger Trentham, who had been sent by 'Bishop Smith who was then President of Doway College, & say'd he sent us the flower of the college, which has bin truly verifyed by the beauty & odeur of his vertus & saintly life, sent by God, & did soon make appear that he was truly invested with his spirit in all respects.'[16] It is little wonder, therefore, that convents would expressly request confessors from certain colleges, such as the Bruges Augustinians from Douai in 1630.[17]

Geographic isolation could heighten these relational aspects. As the only two English institutions in Portugal (and separated from the small Iberian peninsula English outpost colleges at Valladolid, Madrid and Seville), the Bridgettine convent of Our Lady of Syon and the College of Ss Peter and Paul in Lisbon offer an ideal case study of relations between the male and female institutions. The Bridgettine house was a dual one, housing both a male and female community, yet recruitment to the former was seemingly a constant headache. As the brothers acted as confessors and spiritual directors to the women religious, this prompted the reliant female community to intervene when the funding fell through for George Griffin during his training for the priesthood at Lisbon College.[18] However, problems continued and by 1675 the convent had not received a male vocation for over a decade, prompting Bishop Richard Russell to write to the president of Lisbon College, Mathias Watkinson, asking him to help as he could: 'Your charity will not be wanting in affording what comfort you can to them all in their distress and particularly to my sister who has not yet so much of a Religious person as not to be solicitous for the future, which she is even to anxiety in things of the nature which she with all her thoughtfulness can not mend.'[19] By 1695 the male part of the

[16] Caroline Bowden, 'History Writing', *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden, vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), p 256. Similar expressions can be found on pp. 264, 265, 270. At the Bruges Augustinians, James Blomfield was recorded as arriving in 1630 'from the English Colledge at Doway, where his life had been most exemplar in all piety, devotion and innocency.' His subsequent life was described as 'always most saint like': English Convent, Bruges, MS CA, 'Annals, Vol. 1: 1629–1729', p. 75.

[17] Bruges Annals 1, pp. 5–6. This does not necessarily mean the request could always be fulfilled or was always forthcoming: when the Rouen Poor Clares requested a confessor from the President of Douai, Edward Paston, at the start of the eighteenth century, 'he refus'd it' so they instead approached the President of St Gregory's in Paris, Thomas Witham, who duly obliged: Bowden, 'History Writing', p. 199.

[18] Exeter University Library, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, pp. 82–4. For trouble in the male numbers and the links to the colleges, see Peter Cunich, 'The brothers of Syon', in E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham (eds), *Syon Abbey and its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion c.1400–1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 74–5.

[19] Ushaw Colllege, LC/P7/109.

community had finally died off[20] and the sisters naturally turned to the English College, asking for priests to fill in during their search for a confessor.[21] Owing to the small size of the college, this was not always possible, prompting the community to look further afield. For example, in 1696, the Abbess of the Bridgettines received a reply from the head of the order in Rome who had been searching for a potential confessor for them at the city's English College. However, he could not secure the best man due to the college's students taking the missionary oath on entering, a fact confirmed by Cardinal Howard, protector of the English and the colleges.[22]

Sometimes, though, the confessor link could prove particularly strong and result in a close mutual relationship, even leading to the establishment of a new college. The founders of the Paris Augustinian convent were the same as those that subsequently founded the college of St Gregory's in Paris. With Thomas Carre, the procurator at Douai College, Letitia Tredway had the idea of a convent that would be the college's sister establishment. Initially, the plan was to do this at Douai, but Tredway instead opted for Paris in an effort to avoid the danger of a secular versus regular clergy split. Apparently, Gallican Paris was a safer bet than the Jesuit-riddled Spanish Netherlands. With the added influence of Bishop of Chalcedon Richard Smith (in exile following his disastrous handling of relations with the Jesuits in England), the convent was founded in 1634.[23] Despite Smith's death in 1655, Tredway and Carre remained keen on the deceased bishop's idea to found a college in Paris and by the mid-1660s were discussing the plans, Tredway having 'pleged herself to provide some land.' In June 1666, Carre was writing to explain the leading role Tredway was playing in the establishment of this college: 'My Lady desired me speak to what she hinted at, which relates to two things, the first is her zeal for a house for our clergy at Paris for which truly our body is much obliged to her; she offers, and many times hath offered fair as to a garden and other helps.' A year later, Tredway – acting in her capacity as prioress of the Paris Augustinians – was supplying funds and buildings to three priests forced to move to Paris following a fall-out at Douai College in 1667. Carre, by then confessor to the convent, supplied a house for the three

[20] Cunich, 'Brothers of Syon', p. 78.

[21] Exeter University Library, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, p. 132.

[22] Ushaw College, LC/C40, 42. Similarly, in 1768, the nuns could not secure their chosen confessor because his local bishop, Richard Challoner, said he could not spare him from the mission in England: *ibid*., LC/C487, 488.

[23] Antony F. Allison, 'The English Augustinian Convent of Our Lady of Syon at Paris: its foundation and struggle for survival during the first eighty years, 1634–1713', *Recusant History*, 21 (1993), 453–8.

clergymen next to the convent and this informal college to allow secular clergy to continue their studies at the Sorbonne remained there until its formal institution in 1684–85. The convent annals record that Tredway, in her role as prioress, made substantial contributions to this venture, 'taking them in all things into her care as persons of her family' and seeking the full integration of St Gregory's 'into the life of the convent', with the priests taking turns to say daily Mass for the sisters for free and inviting them to preach on public occasions when many of the English living in England would be present.[24] Claire Walker has concluded that 'Tredway's patronage of the secular clergy offers one of the clearest examples of nuns' capacity to exert influence over those generally perceived to be in charge of them'[25] but this is to see events solely through the gender lens. Instead, what Tredway and Carre intended was a fully co-operative endeavour between English female and male institutions. Indeed, Edward Lutton, the convent's assistant confessor, actually lived at St Gregory's until he succeeded Carre in 1674 and sorted the muddle of the convent's finances, his reputation ensuring he was appointed the agent for Douai and Lisbon Colleges in Paris, underlining the entanglement between the male and female institutions.[26] This reinforces the recent argument of Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith that the participation of British women of varying

[24] Antony F. Allison, 'The Origins of St. Gregory's, Paris', *Recusant History*, 21 (1992), 11–25. The convent confessor was to deal with the convent agent in England and still had to be a member of the secular clergy from Douai College though, by 1675, the assisting chaplains were from St Gregory's: Allison, 'English Augustinian Convent', 473–4.

[25] Claire Walker, *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 114.

[26] Allison, 'English Augustinian Convent', 470. 485. Carre was not alone in doubling up the role of convent confessor and college agent: see CRS, 28, pp. 24, 261; Monastery of the Poor Clares, Much Birch, Herefordshire, Gravelines Chronicle, p. 153. This is not the only example of convents helping to run a college. In 1640, the Ghent Benedictines rented a garden house outside the convent walls for the running of a Catholic school for Welsh youngsters. Funded by 'my Lord of Worster', it was maintained by the convent: M J Rumsey (ed.), 'Abbess Neville's annals of five communities of English Benedictine nuns in Flanders 1598–1687', *Miscellanea V*, CRS, vol. 6 (London, 1909), p. 27. On the other side, the English Sepulchrines deliberately chose to establish their house in Liège in order to be close to the English Jesuit college there, the college's professor of theology, Joseph Simons, SJ, helping them secure permission for its foundation in 1642. Underlining the close tie, the canonesses heard Mass at the college before moving into their new premises: CRS, 17, pp. 102–4.

denominations ‘was central to the formation of new practices and discourses’ in later seventeenth-century religious culture.[27]

With this example in mind, it is little surprise to find the convents helping the male colleges elsewhere. Following the burning down of the English Jesuit College of St Omers, the Bruges Augustinians, in 1726, recognized the assistance they had received from that institution in the past and voted to return the favour by giving a hundred pounds sterling towards the college’s rebuilding.[28] In the wake of the suppression of the Jesuits by papal brief in 1773 and the official seizure of the English Jesuit College in Bruges, the convent endeavoured to aid those Jesuits remaining in the city, ‘giving all the Succour & comforts possible both to the distressed Gentlemen & to their Students’, arranging board and food.[29] Similarly, the Sepulchrines buried former Jesuits associated with the colleges in their church.[30] Elsewhere, in 1732, the council of the Dominican convent in Brussels entered some complex financial arrangements with Andrew Winter, the rector of the English Dominican college of St Thomas in Louvain, which ultimately saw them giving 600 gilders for the college’s use.[31] Assistance could also be more routine, indicating regular contact at somewhere like Lisbon. In 1748, the president, John Manley, informed the college’s London agent that his rather wearisome request for a work on the Portuguese art of gilding had led him to ask the Bridgettine abbess, Susan Hill, for information about an artist she had employed to gild an altar. Hill gave him a text written by the artist, Manley commenting, ‘This same artist performed the work at Sion extremely well and consequently must be a perfect master of the trade.’[32] This ‘every day’ relationship was apparently common

[27] Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith, ‘Introduction’, in Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (eds), *Women and Religion in Britain, c. 1660–1760* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 1–22.

[28] Douai Abbey, C2, p. 425.

[29] English Convent, Bruges, MS CX, ‘Annals, Vol. 2: 1729–93’, pp. 214–15, 217, 338. The convent’s prioress, Elizabeth More, was even questioned in 1783 about what had happened to the belongings of the college: *ibid*., pp. 269–70. It should be noted that More was sister to the then-Jesuit provincial, Thomas More, who expressed his thanks for the convent’s help: *ibid*., p. 215.

[30] CRS, 17, p. 173.

[31] The Prioress and community of Carisbrooke, Isle of Wight (eds), ‘Records of the nuns of the second order’, *Dominicana*, CRS, vol. 25 (London, 1925), p. 232.

[32] Ushaw College, LC/V217, John Manley to John Shepperd, 20 November 1747, 17 January 1748.

knowledge as some priests were even contacting the Bridgettines' confessor to intervene with President Manley about the final destination of two newly ordained Lisbon priests.[33]

Manley's seeking of advice from Hill indicates that material culture relationships were not uncommon. Portraits of twelve English kings and queens were passed to the Lisbon Bridgettine house via the English College at Seville, 'a significant donation emphasising their royal past'.[34] This gift shows one English institution helping to forge and bolster the national identity of another. In the 1750s, Francis Kennedy brought with him from Douai College a relic of Charles Borromeo when he went as chaplain to the Rouen Poor Clares.[35] The same convent had previously received a piece of St Francis of Assisi's cloak in 1723 from the procurator of the English College in Rome, which they hung in a crystal reliquary from the neck of the saint's statue and was the subject of an annual procession on the octave of the saint's feast.[36] Indeed, Peter Leech and Maurice Whitehead have discovered further evidence of collaboration in such liturgical 'aids', suggesting that two Jesuits, Thomas Kingsley and Joseph Radford, who taught together at the English Jesuit college at Liège, were putting poetry and music together dedicated to and performed by English nuns in the 1680s.[37]

II

Unsurprisingly, with interaction and the building of relationships between the institutions came disagreements. In Lisbon an angry exchange ensued over students from the college visiting the Bridgettine convent and allegedly compromising its rule of claustration, the nuns'

[33] Ushaw College, LC/V217, John Manley to John Shepperd, 14 October 1741. The priest in question was John Prichard, apparent superior of a tiny community of secular clergy at St Lucar: Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Preists*, vol. 4 (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1977), pp. 224–5.

[34] Caroline Bowden, 'Books and reading at Syon Abbey, Lisbon, in the seventeenth century', in Jones and Walsham (eds), *Syon Abbey*, pp. 186, 188. For this and a link to the English College at Valladolid, see Michael E. Williams, 'Paintings of early British kings and queens at Syon Abbey, Lisbon', *Birggitiana*, 1 (1996), 123–34.

[35] Bowden, 'History Writing', p. 270.

[36] *Ibid*., pp. 87–8, 236. The cloak relic was bequeathed to them by Fr Richard Howard, brother to the Duke of Norfolk.

[37] The nuns were Susan Warner at the Dunkirk Benedictines and Catherine Tasburgh at the Ghent Benedictines (WWTN DB179, GB125): Maurice Whitehead and Peter Leech, 'The mysterious Thomas Kingsley (1650−1695): from Anglican cathedral chorister to English Jesuit composer', paper given at the 'What is Early Modern English Catholicism?' conference, Ushaw College, Durham University, 28 June–1 July 2013.

chaplain, John Marks, writing caustically in 1669 to the college vice-president Matthias Watkinson, 'Had you considered the words of my letter as a considerate man would have done you might have saved yourself the labour of writing a reply and me the trouble of answering it.' Watkinson had seemingly claimed not to have visited the convent on several occasions the previous week, despite Marks having seen him and other members of the college doing so. Rubbishing Watkinson's claims 'that the decrees against *frequentatores monialia* are of no force in Spain nor Portugal', Marks provides a catalogue of evidence to the contrary, pointing out 'I have seen the decrees of several bishoprics of Portugal forbidding the frequent visits of religious women, not allowing any to visit them oftener than 3 or 4 times a year except they be a kin in the first or second degree […] The very superiors cannot give leave to their subjects to visit nunneries except it be to hear confessions. Only the provincials may upon urgent occasions and that very seldom grant that licence.'[38] Apparently the dispute rumbled on: a year later, Marks was writing to the college president John Perrott, alias Barnesley, thanking him for his 'ready concurrence with my intention to promote the recollection and piety of our virtuous Sisters, and y[ou]r diligent care in seing my order perform'd with good [reason]'. He explains that it was forgetfulness which meant he neglected to mention that the president was exempted from the visiting limitations, adding it was his intention 'that at christmas easter and Whitsuntide any of y[ou]r colledgeans may visit our sisters though the time of the restraint be not expird, and likewise that those who are to goe for England may have liberty to come hither when they please one month before their departure: my Lady Abesse desird me to give leave that our Sisters might Speake to their friends about matters conteind in their late letters come from England'.[39] The convent was, apparently, well able to protect itself from undue interference and influence.

Clashes could also occur over the appointment of confessors. The Bruges Augustinians were frank in their chronicle about the failings of some of the men they were sent. When Edward Barker arrived in March 1658 at the behest of George Leyburn, president of Douai College, 'and was admitted upon tryal confessarius of our cloister', the nuns recorded at his death nine months later: 'He was invited hither by thee President of Doway […] but being of a deep Melancholy humour, he was not fit for this employment.' They noted the local archpriest agreed with this conclusion and was ordered by the bishop to write to Leyburn telling him to withdraw Barker: 'The same President had himself been here at our cloister in

[38] Ushaw College, LC/P7/4.

[39] *Ibid.*, LC/C34.

October and found by what he understood here that father Barker was not fit for this employment, yet requested further tryal, promising our Arch Priest that if he found no alteration to the better he would upon notice from him take care to provide a fitter man.' Providence solved the stand-off when Barker died in December 1658, only nine months after his arrival.[40] Leyburn followed this up by recommending (in agreement with the Jesuit provincial) one William Wall in 1659: 'He was learned but of a harsh humour: and many difficulties were raised in our cloister, which caused much trouble, and many inconveniences.'[41] Despite these clashes, the colleges could nevertheless play a role in solving confessor related difficulties within the convents, such as in 1767 at the Bruges Augustinians. The confessor, Francis Hind, having fallen out with the convent superior, threatened to walk out with immediate effect until the vice-president William Fletcher, alias Wilkinson, of Douai College and Alban Butler, president at the Jesuit St Omers College, intervened as mediators.[42]

At the Brussels Dominicans, Mary Stafford Howard[43] was equally scathing about Douai College following events involving her nephew, William Holman, who fled the college where he was being educated in 1704 'for fear of whipping'. Arriving penniless at Brussels, his aunt provided him with assistance, the college's exasperated procurator, Edward Dicconson, noting, 'Whatsoever the young speak sayed to make his cause good in prejudice of this Colledge, my Lord Stafford, his uncle, and his aunt took as Ghospel.' Two priest representatives of the college travelled to Brussels but reported 'my Lord and Lady Mary were so prejudiced that they would not hear of letting him come back, but fell a railing against the Colledge'. Dicconson claimed that the boy's mother was happy with how the college behaved and mortified by the behaviour of her relatives but it was not until the

[40] Bruges Annals 1, pp.78–80.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 82. Memories of perceived Douai incompetence apparently survived well in the convent: in 1710, Augustine Poyntz arrived as confessor at the recommendation of Louis Sabran, SJ. It was noted he had finished his priestly training in Rome having left Douai 'upon some occasion of dissatisfaction in that Colledge'. The nuns seemingly approved of their new confessor: *ibid*., p. 243.

[42] Bruges Annals 2, pp.186–90. To the nuns' satisfaction, face was saved by Butler's appointment of Hind as vice-president at St Omers. Tellingly, Butler, who served as extraordinary confessor after his appointment as St Omers's President, was buried at the convent chapel following his death in 1767, paying for memorial plaques to be placed at St Omers, Douai and in the Bruges Augustinian choir, underlining his view of a shared English Catholic enterprise: *ibid*., p. 217; Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, 4, pp. 52–3.

[43] WWTN, BD041.

provincial of the Dominicans stepped in that the situation was resolved.[44] These examples underline that the convents were not meek victims of male superiority but could and did hold their own when they thought they were being short changed. In fact, they could even cause offence to those in the colleges. In March 1737, Lisbon College's London agent, John Shepperd, commented in a letter to former president Edward Jones, 'I am sorry you meet with so much ingratitude from all hands, I am sensible you have deserved all possible returns of Civility from Sion; but it is the common way of the world to be serv'd just as you are.'[45]

Things could even turn sour in the close founding relationship of the Paris Augustinians and the city's English college. Following the formal institution of St Gregory's and the college's move from next door to the convent in the mid-1680s, the canonesses's chaplains were no longer supplied by the college and were instead French clergymen from nearby churches.[46] In 1698 the convent turned down a bequest that involved a regular Mass being said by the superior of the Paris seminary because 'this appeared a thing which might draw bad consequences & inconueniences' and they were unwilling to 'submit themselues to the seruitude which was intended.'[47] Things apparently got so bad that, in 1699, at the behest of the three vicars apostolic in England and the mediation of George Witham 'a reconciliation was made, & a good kind vnderstanding between the Seminary of St Gregory's & our Monastery re established vpon termes and conditions proposed by their sayd Lordps Bp Leyburne, Bp Giffard, & Bp Smith.'[48] However, the close working relationship apparently never returned, clergy from other colleges or anywhere in Paris being given permission to celebrate Mass at the convent.[49]

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[44] Ushaw College, M1/60.

[45] Ushaw College, LC/C126.

[46] Allison, 'English Augustinian Convent', 474.

[47] WDA, Paris Diurnal, 2 May 1698.

[48] *Ibid*., 23 August 1699. Witham was vicar-general to Bishop Smith of the Northern district. The deterioration in the relationship between the Paris seminary and Augustinian convent may have been exacerbated by the convent's confessor, Edward Lutton, giving shelter to James Rigby, who had been dismissed from St Gregory's by its superior, Anthony Meynell, but was subsequently ordained at Douai and returned to St Gregory's to undertake further studies at the Sorbonne following the agreement negotiated by the vicars apostolic: *ibid*., 7 August 1697, 23 May 1699, 27 August 1699, 11 September 1699; Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*, vol. 3 (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1977), pp. 186–7.

[49] WDA, Paris Diurnal, 1 May 1696, 25 May 1697, 28 October 1697.

Nevertheless, these disputes should not be taken as indicative of a specifically gender war but rather as the usual fallings out common in any relationship. That the convents were viewed as part of a wider movement rather than mere subjects to it was made clear by a report submitted in 1622 to the apostolic nuncio in the Spanish Netherlands by the then president of Douai College, Matthew Kellison. Giving details of both the male and female Catholic institutions in the region, Kellison heaps praise on the Louvain Augustinians, describing their two secular clergy confessors as 'men of virtue'. He hails the Gravelines Poor Clares as having 'a great reputation for holiness and strictness of life, and are a source of admiration to those who see them.' The first cracks in the united Church Militant veneer appear in his description of the Brussels Benedictines. He offers them praise but bitterly remarks, 'Their Spiritual Fathers are nominally secular priests, but really Fathers of the Society, both because their father [confessor] has no connection with other secular priests, and also because the Fathers of the Society have been accustomed to hear confessions and to recommend subjects to them, and are almost the only ones able to do so.' The anti-Jesuit rhetoric becomes even harsher when Kellison turns to the Mary Ward's sisters, he blaming members of the Society for leading these women into lives of infamous scandal, 'which was none too religious, but exactly like that of lay people, except for certain prayers, which they used to boast were said privately by them, and sometimes also by faults in conduct, which were sufficiently unworthy even of lay people.' He charges that this is the women's fault for they 'greatly praised' the Jesuits 'while despising all others'.[50] These verdicts show Kellison viewing the convents in the context of the increasingly savage disagreements between secular clergy and Jesuits then ripping through the English Catholic community.[51] Moreover, the

[50] Edwin H. Burton and T. L. Williams (eds), *Douay College Diaries: Third Diary, 1598-1637*, CRS, vol. 10 (London: 1911), pp. 396–8.

[51] For overviews of these, see Michael C. Questier (ed.), *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead*, Camden Society, Fifth Series, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Antony F. Allison, 'A question of jurisdiction: Richard Smith, Bishop of Chalcedon, and the Catholic laity, 1625–31', *Recusant History*, 16 (1982), 111–45; Michael C. Questier (ed.), *Newsletters from the Caroline Court, 1631–1638: Catholicism and the Politics of the Personal Rule*, Camden Society, Fifth Series, 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). In 1757, the Bruges Augustinians became entangled in the growing mood that would result in the suppression of the Society. In echoes of the approbation affair in England, the local bishop insisted on all confessors receiving their faculties from him, which the Jesuits rejected as all checks were carried out in their own Order. Thus, the nuns' extraordinary confessor, Thomas Clifton, rector of the English College at

female houses were not just reflecting these debates but active agents within them, the communities of women making politically charged choices surrounding their spiritual and religious ethos, decisions that, in the case of the Brussels Benedictines, could have wider ramifications.[52] Indeed, the secular clergy were lobbying Vatican officials on behalf of the then anti-Jesuit Brussels Benedictines abbess, Mary Percy.[53]

It was not just as potential ideological partners that the convents were viewed by the male colleges; the convents also offered official outlets to college hierarchies. For example, the Bridgettines invited the president of Lisbon College to oversee the election of a new abbess in 1734.[54] The rector of the English Jesuit college at Ghent, Edward Slaughter, blessed the new school at the Bruges Augustinians in 1719,[55] whilst Thomas Angier, resident at the English Jesuit college in Bruges and its future rector, received his sister-in-law, Isabella Angier (mother of the nun of the same name), into the Church in 1770 at the convent's chapel.[56] The Douai-trained priest Charles Fryer said his first Mass after ordination in 1771 in the Louvain Augustinians's chapel.[57] Indeed, in 1677, James Smith, the future president of

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Ghent, was refused faculties, causing the nuns 'great concern and not finding anyone willing to come we had no exercise this year': Bruges Annals 2, p. 132.

[52] For nuns's active participation in these wider debates, see James E. Kelly, 'Essex girls abroad: family patronage and the politicization of convent recruitment in the sixteenth century', in Bowden and. Kelly, *English Convents in Exile*, pp. 44–51. For the Brussels split, see Claire Walker, 'Securing souls or telling tales? The politics of cloistered life in an English convent', in Cordula van Wyhe (ed.), *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe: An Interdisciplinary View* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 227–44.

[53] Questier, *Caroline Court*, p. 299. When Tredway and Carre were working on the foundation of the Paris Augustinian convent and determining to ensure its close links with the secular clergy, members of the latter wrote approvingly of the scheme, not least because it might halt plans to found one under Jesuit control. Nevertheless, John Southcote of the English chapter did voice a small note of caution about potential competition between institutions: 'God speed it well, but for my part I affect not such courses, and in my opinion the clergy hath to[o] much to do already with Lisboa college and with the nunnery at Bruxelles, yet I shall be ready to concur with the rest, and follow the major part': *ibid*., pp. 219–20, 183–5.

[54] Ushaw College, LC/C100.

[55] Bruges Annals, 1, p. 356. In 1723, Slaughter's successor as rector at Ghent, Edward Saltmarsh, received the vows of the convent's confessor Augustine Newdigate Poyntz as a member of the Society, shortly before his death at the college: *ibid*., pp. 392–3, 397.

[56] Bruges Annals, 2, pp. 201–2; WWTN, BA005; Geoffrey Holt, *The English Jesuits 1650–1829: A Biographical Dictionary*, CRS, vol. 70 (London: 1984), p. 20.

[57] CRS, 63, p. 349; Anstruther *Seminary Priests*, 4, p. 106. He had been ordained by Patrick Brady, OFM, the Irish bishop of Dromore.

Douai College and vicar apostolic of the Northern district, said his first Mass in the chapel of the Rouen Poor Clares. The nuns recorded that during his time as Douai president, Smith 'shew'd himself a most perticular, & true friend to the house'.[58] Edward Paston, president of Douai College, sang Mass to mark the feast of the Assumption at the Paris Augustinians on several occasions, at one point bringing along the college procurator, Edward Dicconson.[59] The Bridgettines frequently used the president of Lisbon College – as well as other members of the college staff – as a go-between to the outside world, delivering letters, money and news from home or members of the hierarchy like Richard Russell, indicating frequent visits to the nuns on the part of the college staff.[60] Nor was the hospitality only one way: in 1664, the abbess of the Pontoise Benedictines, Jane Thorold, stopped at the Jesuit college of St Omers on her way back from conducting business on behalf of her community. There she 'was very obligingly entertayned in that Colledge with all thos testimonyes of kyndness in theyr powre to show her'.[61] Equally, during the French Revolution, the members of the Brussels Dominican convent found shelter with the English Dominicans at Bornhem.[62]

More than just indicative of a working relationship, these actions sometimes even spilled over into open expressions of praise and respect. As early as 1579, a letter received at Douai College from England went out of its way to praise the Bridgettine nuns in England at that time: 'For there passinge greate constancy in there fayth, singuler modesty in ther behaviour and wise and discreete answers the are thorow owte the Realme talked of and commended yea even of ther enemies.'[63] The Brussels Dominicans, the English Dominican college at Louvain and the male house in Bornhem all sang weekly remembrances for the dead of the English province.[64] In the early 1730s, the prioress of the Antwerp Carmelites, Mary Birbeck, asked the Jesuit, Percy Plowden, to write an edifying life of Mary Margaret

[58] Bowden, 'History Writing', p. 148.

[59] WDA, Paris Diurnal, 15 August 1696; 15 August 1699; 21 September 1707.

[60] Ushaw College, LC/P7/22, 70, 109, 122; LC/V217, John Manley to White and Fisher, 7 October 1744; John Manley to John Shepperd, 1 June 1745, 3 July 1745, 5 September 1746, 19 December 1747; Ushaw College, LC/C285, 440, 459, 464, 472.

[61] CRS, 6, p. 58.

[62] CRS, 25, pp. 239–40.

[63] Anon. (ed.) [Fathers of the congregation of the London Oratory], with an introduction by T. F. Knox, *The first and second diaries of the English College, Douay, and an appendix of unpublished documents* (London: 1878), p. 149.

[64] CRS, 25, p. 197.

Wake, which he delivered around the same time as he became rector of the English College in Rome. Plowden further advised the prioress to have a work written celebrating and memorializing the community's history.[65]

In this context, it is little surprise to find the colleges playing an active role in recruitment to the convents. In the early 1620s, Agnes Tasburgh was sent to the Louvain Augustinians by Matthew Kellison, president of Douai College, whilst around 1625 Frances Smith was advised to enter the convent by a Jesuit living at her aunt's house who knew of it from his time at the English Jesuit College of St John's in the same town.[66] Abbess Anne Neville noted the close relationship between the Ghent Benedictines and the town's English Jesuit college: 'thes good fathers dealt with severall familyes in England to send theyr children and relations to this new plantatione, so as it began much to flourish with a good reputation both at home and abroad, which invited many to setle ther.'[67] Inevitably, isolated in Lisbon, the English college played a significant role in recruitment to the Bridgettines, particularly once the community's male side had expired. In 1735, the former college procurator, Richard Green, sent a letter to the college president, Edward Jones, carried by a 'Mrs Chambers, who comes over to Sion House to be admitted as a Lay Sister: she's a very good woman and will certainly give content to the Community'.[68] In 1764, the college's London agent, John Sheppard, requested college procurator John Preston to contact the Bridgettine abbess, Winefred Hill, to ask about an unnamed potential recruit recommended by James Talbot, coadjutor bishop of the London district, but lacking in a fortune.[69] The following year, Sheppard was again writing about a young woman named Fleetwood, who

[65] Katrien Daemen-de Gelder, 'Life Writing II', *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden, vol. 4 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), pp. xiii–xiv, 2–3.

[66] Douai Abbey, C2, pp. 258–9, 297–8. Elizabeth Lombard, who professed as a lay sister at the convent in 1623, had been converted to Catholicism by a Jesuit resident at St Omers college: *ibid*., pp. 261–2; WWTN, GP222. Another future president of Douai, George Fisher, *alias* Muscote, had received Elizabeth Hone into the Church and recommended several convents to her before she was professed at the Gravelines Poor Clares in 1630. Her aunt paid her dowry and also gave a substantial donation to Douai College: Bowden, 'History Writing', p. 136.

[67] CRS, 6, p. 20. In 1717, several months after her clothing, Rebecca Pigott departed the Bruges Augustinians having sought advice about her vocation from the novice master at the Ghent college, who recommended she join the Gravelines Poor Clares: Bruges Annals, 1, pp. 334–5, WWTN GP222.

[68] Ushaw College, LC/C117. An Ann Chambers (WWTN, LB037) had entered as a lay sister in 1698 but there is no record of another, so either this individual was not accepted or Green mistook her for a postulant rather than returning from some business in England.

[69] *Ibid*., LC/C450, 451, 454.

had been educated by the Ursulines at St Omer but not allowed to join them by her mother. Her parents having consented to her entering an English house and her being known by Richard Challoner, vicar apostolic of the London district, the tradesman father reportedly liked the sound of the Bridgettines because he knew they would be reasonable in their monetary expectations. In the letter, he sends his compliments to Abbess Hill and mentions that the young woman would be a benefit because of her singing voice. After some negotiations between the father and the abbess, conducted seemingly through Shepperd and Preston, a dowry was agreed upon but Fleetwood apparently left soon after, finding convent life too onerous.[70] Such dealings at Lisbon were nothing new: in 1744 president John Manley had to write to Shepperd twice, the original letter presumably being lost, saying Syon's abbess needed no more recruits of 'that sort', presumably lay sisters.[71] Indeed, an R. Carnaby of Durham was asking the president, Edward Jones, to intervene with a potential convent recruit in 1736. He expressed the concerns of the financial backers of a Mrs Smith about the sum now due, mentioning that 'she might have bin a nunn at Paris at the Blue nuns, a very good house' and one that was much cheaper but she was apparently obsessed with going to Portugal. Carnaby says he only mentions this 'to let you know so much for your own conduct towards her, & for her good in sifting her thoroughly' but does ask, if her vocation proves true, whether Jones might 'prevail (in case so much moneys be necessary to make the vow of holy poverty among Poor Clares) with some' of his supporters and acquaintances in Portugal.[72]

Equally, the male and female institutions became entangled financially in their mutual relationships. The Brussels Benedictines had investments in the English College at Douai, placing substantial percentages of several nuns's dowries in the 'rents' system there in the first half of the seventeenth century.[73] Between 1646 and 1647, the Louvain Augustinians received a legacy from the recently deceased president of the English College at Douai, George Fisher, *alias* Muscote, whilst a priest and 'associate' of the convent, Richard Worthington, established at his death 'a perpetuall foundation' of three hundred pounds to

[70] *Ibid*., LC/C462, 463, 465, 467, 469. There is no record of her in WWTN.

[71] Ushaw College, LC/V217, John Manley to John Shepperd, 13 March 1744, 14 April 1744.

[72] Ushaw College, LC/C121. Also referred to in LC/C126.

[73] By the 1620s, there were also investments in an unnamed English Jesuit college, as well as a Dutch Jesuit one in Brussels: Downside Abbey, Brussels Benedictines archive, 'The Receipts, Disbursements and Debts Of our Monastery, from the year 1599 to 1736', printed in Kelly, 'Convent Management', pp. 77, 78, 84.

support poor postulants and did the same at Douai College.[74] Indeed, when the Louvain Augustinians were looking to establish a new community in Bruges in 1629, they entered negotiations with Edward Silisdon, procurator of the Jesuit college at Ghent.[75] In 1696, Abbess Elizabeth Petre of the Ghent Benedictines visited her brother, Edward Petre, rector of the English College at St Omers 'by whose means they expected some relief from the temporal wants of their Monastry.'[76] As already mentioned, this assistance could work both ways, Letitia Tredway and the Paris Augustinians lending much financial support to the male college in Paris.[77]

Following the death of the last Bridgettine brother, the nuns in Lisbon seemed to share Lisbon College's agent in London. He negotiated annuity investments for them[78] and handled many donations from benefactors, asking the president of the college to transfer the money.[79] This set-up could cause tensions: the London agent John Sheppard complained to the president John Manley in 1754 about the Bridgettines expecting him to pay for their post and then ask the president for reimbursement, advising Manley: 'I think the good Ladys at Sion should advise their Friends or Relations to direct their Letters to Mr Howard the Benedictine who is their Agent, and not to me.' Following up for good measure two months later, on 5 February 1755, he asked: 'Pray have not the good Ladys at Sion an Agent in London? He, I think, would be the properest person to transact all their affairs here.'[80] Such complaints were apparently to no avail: in May 1767 Sheppard was writing to the convent procurator about

[74] Douai Abbey, The Archives of St Monica's Louvain and St Augustine's Newton Abbot, 1609–1976, P1, fols 21v, 38r; P3; Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*, vol. 2 (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1975), pp. 365–6. In 1698, Edward Hunt, 'a Priest of Douay-Colledg' visited the Paris Augustinians to discuss with his niece what she planned to do with some money she had inherited: WDA, Paris Diurnal, 5 April 1698; Kelly, 'Convent Management', pp. 10–11.

[75] Douai Abbey, C2, pp. 340–2; Bruges Annals, 1, pp. 1–2.

[76] They lodged at the Bruges Augustinians for one night on their journey: Bruges Annals, 1, p. 192.

[77] See above pp. XXXX and Allison, 'Origins of St. Gregory's', 20–1.

[78] Ushaw College, LC/C478, 480, 482. The Louvain Augustinians and Douai College apparently had 'cross-over' dealings with the latter's agent in London: CRS, 28, p. 95.

[79] Ushaw College, LC/C290, 305, 329, 330, 392, 408, 420, 457, 468, 481. The Bridgettine accounts held at Ushaw from 1762–77 (uncatalogued at the time of writing) show numerous receipts and confirmations of these payments, as well as the agent, to president, to nun chain the money passed along: Ushaw College, Syon Accounts, uncatalogued.

[80] *Ibid*., LC/C295, 298.

money he himself had already transferred but the procurator had failed to pay to the Bridgettines.[81]

III

So far all the relationships considered have been between English exile institutions and have shown a mutual working together for the survival and even furtherance of English Catholicism. Looking at it from the perspective of national identities, this is not necessarily surprising: after all, the English convents were primarily national interests.[82] But are the same connections evident when the exile religious institutions from elsewhere in the British Isles are considered? What can these relationships tell us about archipelagic identities and attitudes in exile?

Starting with the Scottish exile communities, the first thing to note is that these were fewer in number than English or Irish institutions. Nevertheless, the initial lack of contact with the English convents is surprising. When the Poor Clare convent at Gravelines became too crowded in the mid-seventeenth century, they wrote to Rome, 'to our deare & faithfull friend, & father', William Thomson, OFM, 'a Scotchman by birth', former confessor to Henrietta Maria and at the time head of the English province of Friars Minor. His influence proved vital in the foundation of the Rouen Poor Clares.[83] In 1695, whilst their confessor was absent and their temporary replacement otherwise engaged in Jacobite matters, the Rouen Poor Clares received 'Father Menisse a Scotch Canon Regular' who 'came twice a week in the afternoon to heare the Communitys Confessions.'[84] In 1782, 'a Scotch Secular Priest' passed through Bruges on his way to retire at Douai College, 'his health being impaired by too hard a Mission at Aberdeen in Scotland.' He stayed at the Bruges Augustinians for several months,

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[81] *Ibid*., LC/C483. In 1741, Cecily Tunstall, the procurator for the Louvain Augustinians, wrote to their London agent, Mannock Strickland, that the president of Douai, William Thornburgh, had apparently forgotten to pay some money to him that Tunstall had sent: Richard Williams (ed.), 'Strickland Papers', in Kelly, 'Convent Management', p. 212. In 1722, the Brussels Dominicans were involved in a protracted entanglement with the male college at Louvain about money owed: CRS, 25, pp. 216–19.

[82] Caroline Bowden, 'The English convents in exile and questions of national identity, *c*.1600–1688', in David Worthington (ed.), *British and Irish Emigrants and Exiles in Europe, 1603–1688* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 297–314.

[83] Bowden, 'History Writing', p. 1.

[84] *Ibid*., p. 368.

saying Mass for them. In the same year, a Scottish priest named Hiver filled in at the convent until a replacement could be found following the departure of Matthew Burgess as confessor after his involvement in a drunken scandal.[85] This is very limited contact: in the case of the Rouen Poor Clares, the Scottish friar they relied on was nominally a member of the English province anyway, whilst they used a Scottish priest for confession only in desperation, when there was no-one else available. The latter was also the case at the Bruges Augustinians, no doubt still struggling administration-wise after the closure of the nearby English Jesuit college.

These strands are evident in the case of the Paris Augustinians. The Scottish College was actually next door to the convent so, if there was going to be a mutual relationship between the national institutions anywhere then it would be expected to be in this instance. However, the surviving evidence suggests minimal contact. Charles Whitford, 'sub Principal and Procurator of the Scotch Colledg our neighbours' provided emergency last rites to a nun in 1707.[86] Previously, in 1693, due to the growing size of the community and concerns over discipline, the Archbishop of Paris had appointed an external superior in his place. He chose Lewis Innes, superior of the next door Scots College, who soon clashed with the prioress, Eugenia Perkins. She turned for assistance to the French Benedictines and by January 1696, Innes had resigned and the president-general of the English Benedictine Congregation, Joseph Shireburn, was busy lobbying for the archbishop to once more exercise the office. Instead, another English Benedictine, Benedict Nelson, was chosen by the community to fill the role. Antony Allison says that Innes, though known for his Jansenist leanings, was chosen because he was 'on the spot' and could speak English; Allison merely comments that the Paris Augustinians had grown close to the English Benedictines.[87] Maybe this was the case

[85] Bruges Annals, 2, pp. 261, 267. The priest, Oliver, may have been Andrew Oliver: Dominic Aidan Bellenger, *English and Welsh Priests 1558-1800: A Working List* (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1984), p. 93.

[86] WDA, Paris Diurnal, 5 June 1700, 1 March 1707. On the former date, in an odd reference, Whitford was sent a 'Swarm of bees' by the convent. In 1698, Whitford had proposed Agnes Warcope for entry into the convent: she was accepted but only on the condition she use the same spiritual directors as the rest of the community, presumably meaning she did not separate herself under Scottish 'influence'. In 1714, Whitford became principal of the college: Kelly, 'Convent Management' p. 107.

[87] WDA, Paris Diurnal, 6, 8, 19 January 1696, 19 October 1697; Allison, 'English Augustinian Convent', 479–81. Ironically, in 1704 Innes would argue against plans to merge the Scottish, English and Irish colleges as a 'British' College and advise the retention of national rectors: Mark Dilworth, OSB, 'Beginnings 1600–1707', in Raymond McCluskey (ed.), *The Scots College, Rome, 1600–2000* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000), pp. 36–7;

but, for a community formed on such strong connections with the secular clergy, this shift to a religious order certainly appears to be a move away from the convent's founding ethos. Moreover, it saw them actively reject a college of secular clergy in their shifting of allegiance. In short, it would seem that English nationality trumped spiritual ethos in this instance.

Irish colleges were far more numerous, twenty-nine being established between 1578 and 1689. Of these, eight were in the same locations as English convents, meaning a close geographical proximity.[88] Nevertheless, though more frequent, contact between the institutions remained minimal. The Louvain Augustinians accommodated the Irish Franciscans in 1607 as they needed a place to say Mass during the construction of their college in the town.[89] The Irish secular clergy college at Paris became one of the 'largest and most prestigious of the continental Irish colleges'; its priests sometimes preached on major feasts and celebrations at the Paris Augustinian convent.[90] The English Sepulchrines in Liège

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Michael E. Williams, 'A British College in Rome?', in *ibid*., pp. 145–50. My thanks to Liam Chambers for this information. It was not the first time such amalgamations had been mooted: Robert Persons, SJ, had rejected any attempt to combine Irish and English students under one roof in Valladolid in 1589: Thomas Morrissey, SJ, 'The Irish student diaspora in the sixteenth century and the early years of the Irish College at Salamanca', *Recusant History*, 14 (1978), 246.

[88] There were Irish secular clergy colleges in Paris (founded 1578), Antwerp (1600), Rouen (1612), Louvain (1624) and Lisbon (1590), the latter being particularly small; Dominican colleges at Lisbon (1659) and Louvain (1626); and an Irish Franciscan college also in Louvain (1607): Patricia O'Connell, 'The early-modern Irish college network in Iberia, 1590–1800', in Thomas O'Connor (ed.), *The Irish in Europe, 1580–1815* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), p. 52.

[89] Douai Abbey, C2, pp. 72–3. The chronicler caustically remarks that the friars offered to pay for wine and candles used but they could not afford to do so. The guardian of the college, a Fr. Hugh, acted as interpreter to the Infanta's confessor during a visit to the community at the time whilst from 1624 to 1630, after the English Jesuits had left Louvain, an Irish priest named Peter Wadding assisted the convent confessor until his superiors sent him to Germany: *ibid*., pp. 83, 351. Due to the Franciscan college's ongoing financial issues, the friars sought some funds from such local chaplaincy work: Thomas O'Connor, 'Irish Franciscan networks at home and abroad, 1607–1640', in Worthington (ed.), *British and Irish Emigrants*, p. 281. An Irish Dominican college was also founded in Louvain in 1626, one for secular clergy two years before that.

[90] Priscilla O'Connor, 'Irish clerics and French politics of grace: the reception of Nicholas Madgett's doctoral thesis, 1732', in Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Irish Migrants in Europe after Kinsale, 1602–1820* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p. 184; WDA, Paris Diurnal, 27 November 1695, 4 December 1695, 18 December 1695, 1 April 1696, 20 April 1696, second Sunday of Advent 1697, 12 April 1699, 16 July 1708. An Irish priest said the funeral rite of a nun at the Paris Conceptionists in 1786: CRS, 8, p. 268.

allowed an Irish Augustinian friar from Paris to be buried in their church in 1780 but displayed uncharacteristic carelessness by having the wrong name inscribed on his gravestone.[91] In Rouen, site of an Irish secular clergy college, the English Poor Clares adopted a policy of not accepting Irish postulants following what they perceived as community problems caused by national factions.[92] Prior to that fall out, the community had recourse to Irish clergy only in times of need, such as when the confessor was absent and a nun was dying or, in 1668, when the community's confessor was ill, 'Mother Abbess was forc'd to have recourse to an Irish Canon call'd Father Taylor, who liv'd at the hospital'. The canon's superior gave grudging permission for him to hear confessions once a week. On his departure, 'Mother Abbess was forc'd to beg Mr. Mayler an Irish Priest to assist us, he was one who lived in this town, but she cou'd never resolve to make use of him till this present necessity, he being a person whom the Community much apprehended, both in regard of his being an Irish man, as also for several other reasons, which might well give them difficulty'.[93] Clearly, his Irish nationality was a source of concern to the English women religious. This sense also pervaded at the Bruges Augustinians; in 1758 the bishop was mindful that the nuns had not had an extraordinary confessor for a year and was considering an English-speaking Irish Oratorian for the job. The abbess quickly wrote to Thomas Willis, confessor to the Brussels Benedictines, and secured him in the role, all seemingly horrified at the prospect of Irish involvement.[94]

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[91] CRS, 17, p. 173. His name was Thadeus Maddon but the nuns admitted to putting Thomas 'on his grave stone by mistake'.

[92] See Marie-Louise Coolahan, 'Archipelagic identities in Europe: Irish nuns in English convents', in Bowden and Kelly, *English Convents in Exile*, pp. 211–28. Though the essay at hand is focussed on the relationship between English women religious and male exile colleges, it should be noted that the English Benedictine convent at Ypres was transferred to the Irish nation in the 1680s in fractious circumstances: see Patrick Nolan, *The Irish Dames of Ypres: Being a History of the Royal Irish Abbey of Ypres Founded A.D. 1665 and Still Flourishing* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1908); James E. Kelly, 'Bringing it all back home: Mary Butler (1641–1723) – Benedictine Abbess of Ypres', in Salvador Ryan (ed.), *Treasures of Irish Christianity, Volume III: To the Ends of the Earth* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2015), pp. 64–6.

[93] Bowden, 'History Writing', pp. 89–90. The exiled Bishop of Kilfenora, Andrew Lynch, also visited the convent on official diocesan business on several occasions: *ibid*., pp. 84–5, 121, 146. My thanks to Eamon O Ciosáin for his advice about the Irish presence in Rouen and the activities of Andrew Lynch.

[94] Bruges Annals, 2, pp. 134–5. In 1668, in the absence of a confessor, the community relied upon 'Rd Mr. Saxfield an ancient Irish Priest who lived in town', to provide emergency cover.

Necessity and lack of an English male Franciscan province meant that, at their founding in 1609, the Gravelines Poor Clares relied upon Irish Recollects from the College at Louvain as confessors. They had rejected the Englishmen suggested for the job as unfit for purpose, underlining that they would not meekly accept substandard spiritual provision for the sake of national identity cohesion. Nevertheless, in 1625, 'they wanted the satisfaction to have a Confessour of their own nation, which they cou'd not have under their order, there being no English Convent professing the order of Saint Francis.'[95] In 1641, the bishop sent as confessor an Irish priest named Dalton, 'the pastor of the great hospital, a friend to the Community and a man without exception for ability' as confessor to the Ghent Benedictines. They politely declined, citing their right to choose their own confessor. Unspoken was their choice of Englishmen – two Jesuits from the English College at Ghent.[96] The Irish established secular clergy and Dominican colleges in Lisbon. Despite there being only one other English-speaking option in the city – the English college – the Bridgettines had minimal contact with the Irish. As usual, they fleetingly relied on Irish confessors when things got desperate – in their case, when the male side of the community died out – but this caused the Bridgettines a major problem, the papal nuncio questioning why an English community should have an Irish confessor. Thus, in the opening decades of the eighteenth century they installed as primary confessor an Englishman from Lisbon College, above the unhappy Irish confessor, Archer, who eventually returned to the Irish Dominican college.[97] Two presumably Irish clergy signed a financial statement in 1771,[98] plus by 1774 they were again seeking the help of a Dominican from the Irish College, Andrew MacCormack, to act as confessor.[99] Otherwise recorded contact was negligible; Catherine Witham did not even mention the Irish college in a letter to her mother in 1756 detailing the Lisbon earthquake, despite the college being badly damaged. However, she did find time to mourn the death of John Manley, president of the English College, in the disaster.[100]

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[95] Gravelines Chonicle, pp. 45–7, 142.

[96] CRS, 6, pp. 28–9.

[97] Exeter University Library, MS 262/Add. 1/B/158, pp. 121–42.

[98] Kelly, 'Convent Management', pp.57–8. One was a Dominican so probably from the order's Irish college in the city.

[99] Ushaw College, LC/A19/30.

[100] Nicky Hallett (ed.), 'Life Writing I', *English Convents in Exile, 1600–1800*, gen. ed. Caroline Bowden, vol. 3 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), pp. 309–12. Interestingly, the English college did have contact with Lisbon's Irish College, but overwhelmingly in the late eighteenth century. This lack of contact before then – and

Notionally, the English convents should have been united with not just English, but also Scottish and Irish exile institutions in a spirit of Counter-Reformation zeal; the members of these various institutions were all theoretically excluded to varying degrees by the same Protestant authorities. Instead, as Albert Loomie has noted in the Spanish context, there was little effort at rapprochement between the different nationalities: 'religion did not prove to be a convenient bond in any degree for those who were opposed, for various reasons, to the politics of the English Court.'[101] This can partly be explained by attitudes absorbed through a form of osmosis. English national identity was developing in the seventeenth century, 'a radical Protestant tradition that championed English sovereignty and supremacy within the British Isles.'[102] Indeed, despite Protestantism and its accompanying anti-Catholicism being major components of this developing English national identity, English Protestants still regularly placed national interests before any notional form of an international Protestant alliance.[103] With the exile institutions founded on a national basis – and therefore, according to Bossy, exuding 'xenophobic ethos'[104] – it is little surprise that they tapped into the same English superiority complex as their Protestant fellow countrymen and women. Moreover,

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with the Bridgettines – could be explained by the fact that the small Irish College was run by Jesuits, whilst the English College was vehemently secular clergy in ethos: Patricia O'Connell, *The Irish College at Lisbon: 1590–1834* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 75, 91, 93, 98, 122, 127–8, 131; O'Connell, 'College network in Iberia', pp. 53, 62–3; Simon Johnson, *The English College at Lisbon: From Reformation to Toleration* (Bath: Downside Abbey Press, 2014).

[101] Albert J. Loomie, *The Spanish Elizabethans: The English Exiles at the Court of Philip II* (London: Burns & Oates, 1963), p. 231. As Karin Schüller has pointed out, there needs to be much work done on the conflicts between the migrant groups in exile and their separation into different social spheres and institutions: Karin Schüller, 'Irish migrant networks and rivalries in Spain, 1575–1659', in O'Connor and Lyons, *Irish Migrants*, p. 88n.. See also Christopher Highley, C*atholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 84.

[102] Willy Maley, 'The British problem in three tracts on Ireland', in Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (eds), *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 181.

[103] Colin Kidd, 'Protestantism, constitutionalism and British identity under the later Stuarts', in Bradshaw and Roberts, *British Consciousness*, pp. 338–9; Anthony Fletcher, 'The first century of English Protestantism and the growth of national identity,' in Stuart Mews (ed.), 'Religion and National Identity', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp. 309–17; W. B. Patterson, 'King James I and the Protestant cause in the crisis of 1618–22', in *ibid.*, pp. 319–34.

[104] John Bossy, 'Catholicity and Nationality in the North European Counter-Reformation', in Mews, 'Religion and National Identity', p. 288.

English Catholics developed their own branch of this 'greater England' theory to the point where they could even prove wary of the concept of a unified Catholic Britain.[105] True, this sense of English national identity and archipelagic pre-eminence pre-dated the Reformation and so was as much an English Catholic national identity as a Protestant one, but English Catholics could develop a dualistic approach to identity, both national and universal.[106] The separateness of Ireland – and its reluctance to be part of three kingdom empire building[107] – might explain why the English convents could stomach involvement with Irish male exile institutions more than Scottish ones; despite Irish Catholics recognizing that English Catholics put national interests first by the end of the sixteenth century, there remained the potential for some collaboration.[108]

Ultimately though, national identities won out over confessional ones. The exile institutions became focal points for expatriate communities, fulfilling various social, educational and political functions not normally associated with religious foundations.[109] As with the gender relationships between the English institutions, so the connections between the English convents and the Irish and Scots colleges could become increasingly frequent as the institutions became more settled and secure in their exilic positions.[110] In the Catholic cause, boundaries could be overcome; rather than a gendered understanding that perceives a

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[105] *Ibid*., pp. 290–5; Highley, *Writing the Nation*, pp. 98–111, 123–37. For this in the exile English male colleges, see Mark Netzloff, 'The English colleges and the English nation: Allen, Persons, Verstegan, and diasporic nationalism', in Ronald Corthell, Frances E. Dolan, Christopher Highley and Arthur F. Marotti (eds), *Catholic Culture in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, IND.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 236–60. For a moment when some people seriously considered a united Catholic Britain in the second half of the seventeenth century, see Gabriel Glickman, 'A British Catholic community? Ethnicity, identity and recusant politics, 1660–1750' in James E. Kelly and Susan Royal (eds), *Early Modern English Catholicism: Identity, Memory and Counter-Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, forthcoming).

[106] Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 4–5, 35–6, 51, 59–60, 202–3.

[107] John Morrill, 'The British problem, *c*.1534–1707', in Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill (eds.), *The British Problem, c.1534–1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p. 12; Brendan Bradshaw, 'The Tudor reformation and revolution in Wales and Ireland: the origins of the British problem', in *ibid.*, p. 43.

[108] Highley, *Writing the Nation*, pp. 140, 142, 145.

[109] For the example of the Irish colleges, see O'Connell, 'College network in Iberia', pp. 51, 53.

[110] Only one foundation of English women religious was forced to close, the Pontoise Benedictines collapsing under financial strain in 1786: Walker, *Gender and Politics*, pp. 81–3.

constant battle between the sexes, the English convents and colleges, notwithstanding some disputes, could and frequently did work together in a relationship of mutual help and support. Whilst this overriding of traditional divides between men and women has been commented on in the missionary context of England,[111] it has not been acknowledged as having been at play between the exile institutions operating in officially Catholic countries. To present English women religious as potential victims of male clerics robs them of their own agency, their negotiated role in the Counter-Reformation (which was similar to the experience of secular women[112]) and their part in the shared goal of the conversion of England. Yet it is that shared goal that arguably undermined the Catholic exile archipelagic experience. Hastings notes that Catholics, whether in England or Ireland, 'went on refusing to see national loyalty in religious terms', despite the efforts of the Elizabethan settlement to do just that. He puts this down to the success of the Counter-Reformation.[113] Maybe in the short term, this is correct, the flow of clergy trained in continental Tridentine seminaries halting the erosion of national Catholic identity. However, in the long-term, this nationally focussed approach may more realistically signal a failure of the Counter-Reformation as throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Catholics from England, Scotland and Ireland failed to harness their potential in exile to override parochial interests and create a shared archipelagic identity that could achieve their goals and that of the Counter Reformation's united church militant front.

[111] For example, Laurence Lux-Sterritt, '"Virgo becomes virago": women in the accounts of seventeenth-century English Catholic missionaries', *Recusant History*, 30 (2011), 537–53.

[112] For example, see Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Simone Laqua-O'Donnell, *Women and the Counter-Reformation in Early Modern Münster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

[113] Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood*, p. 81.